



in this issue:

MARGARET ATWOOD

DAVID HELWIG

D. G. JONES

STUART MACKINNON

JAMES REANEY

ROGER SEAMAN

QUARRY

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 4

SUMMER 1967

arcmtl 2021

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 4
SUMMER 1967.

Quarry

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2021

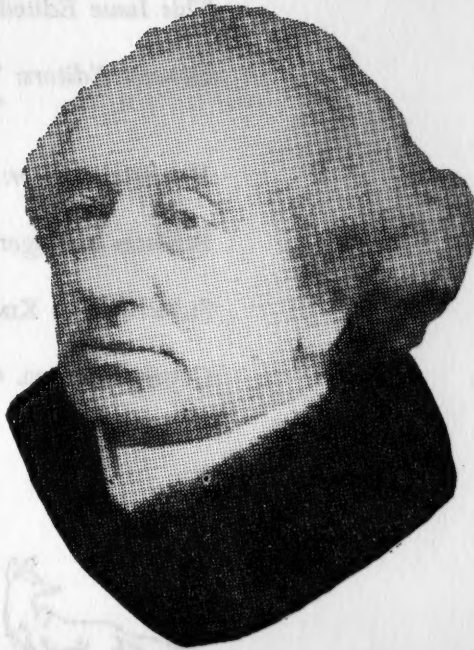
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Five Poems by Stuart MacKinnon

As we walked through the town
 My new and only love and I
 The hollow town by the sea
 There was one square we crossed
 More desolate than our lives
 Before we met, clinkered and
 Tramped in gentle mounds
 With dark red buildings at the side.

There was a small object we found
 Oval and glazed grey brown
 Do you remember in our palms
 Glass that was not glass –
 That had been through a fire.

Like true lovers we discarded it
 The only thing in that hollow town
 That was full and round
 And knew, like love, how
 To withstand an interval.



Whose fire is this left burning
 Headless fire oh headless fire
 Flaring the desolate prairie like
 Oil wells being burned off
 Which illumine stark derricks at night

The death van knows roads
 That join these fires, though
 The dark seems so dense between them

The welders arc a cool green-white
 Against the heavy leaves, fitfully
 Dispells the night. Though cold,
 Friendly by comparison and
 Quick to sear the unguarded eye.

I am not allowed loving
 Without the burn of revelation
 Or the interval of dark roads.

Turn your back to the window
 Turn your face to the wall
 There is no end to loving
 The drifting snow
 The tunneling mole
 Fix your mind on the interval



snow on her birthday

The snow enfolding love
By dumb hands invented
Close your eyes my dear
Remember whose hand closed them
Not snow, not white covering
Nor the covered, but what
Goes on under the blanket
Of an interval. The hand
Knows unseen gestures
The stubble makes
A sharp embrace

for ruth: plato's justice

Here is a kingdom for shining in
Here is a box for your gloved hand
opening and closing
let the powerful rule
— and protect the weak

The roads are smooth
times are good take
what you want and
be fulfilled

Here is a poem for your gloved hand



Four Poems by Margaret Atwood

the green man

(for the Boston Strangler)

The green man, before whom
the doors melted,

the window man, the furnace man, the electric
light man,
the necessary man, always expected.

He said the right words,
they opened the doors;

He turned towards them
his face, a clear mirror
because he had no features.

In it they saw reflected their
own sanity;

They saw him as a function.

They did not look
in his green pockets, where he kept

his hands changing their shape

his hands held for them
the necessary always-
expected emptiness

his no identification
card, his no
person

The green man,
turning their heads quietly
towards the doors, behind whom
the doors closed.

progressive insanities of a pioneer

i)

He stood, a point
on a sheet of green paper
proclaiming himself the center,

with no walls, no borders
anywhere; the sky no height
above him, totally un-
enclosed
and shouted:

Let me out!

ii)

He dug the soil in rows,
imposed himself with shovels.

He asserted
in the furrows, I
am not random.

The ground
replied with aphorisms:
a tree-sprout, a nameless
weed, words
he couldn't understand.

iii)

The house pitched
the plot staked
in the middle of nowhere.

At night the mind
inside, in the middle
of nowhere.

The idea of an animal
patters across the roof.

In the darkness the fields
defend themselves with fences
in vain:

everything
is getting in.

iv)

By daylight he resisted.
He said, disgusted
with the swamps' clamourings and the outbursts
of rocks,

This is not order
but the absence
of order.

He was wrong, the unanswering
forest implied:

It was
an ordered absence

v)

For many years
he fished for a great vision,
dangling the hooks of sown
roots under the surface
of the shallow earth.

It was like
enticing whales with a bent
pin. Besides he thought
in that country
only the worms were biting.

vi)

If he had known unstructured
space is a deluge
and stocked his log house-
boat with all the animals
even the wolves,
he might have floated.

But obstinate he
stated, The land is solid
and stamped,
watching his foot sink
down through stone
up to the knee.

vii)

Things
refused to name themselves; refused
to let him name them.

The wolves hunted
outside.

On his beaches, his clearings,
by the surf of under-
growth breaking
at his feet, he foresaw
disintegration

and in the end
through eyes
made ragged by his
effort, the tension
between subject and object,

the green
vision, the unnamed
whale invaded.

a voice

A voice from the other country
stood on the grass. He became
part of the grass.

The sun shone
greenly on the blades of his hands

Then we
appeared, climbing down
the hill, you
in your blue sweater.

He could see that
we did not occupy
the space, as he did. We
were merely in it

My skirt was yellow
small
between his eyes

We moved along
the grass, through
the air that was inside
his head. We did not see him.

He could smell
the leather on our feet

We walked
small
across
his field of vision (he
watching us) and disappeared.

His brain grew over
the places we had been.

He sat. He was curious
about himself. He wondered
how he had managed to think us.

what happened

Where the houses here surround
this moment, the leaves are yellow and going
out; while in your part of the country
it is snowing or maybe
there is a spring flood, it can
be expected on the prairie
five blocks away.

The mail
delivery is slow
again, I won't know till much later.

Once you said we could use
the telephone and be simultaneous,
but I don't trust it.

The metaphor I need is
the scar: that instant cut into your
side, carried a dead label
for eleven years;
but the collision with the knife, your pain
caught up with me
only a week ago through
the ends of my fingers.

No wires tender even as nerves
can transmit the impact of
our seasons, our catastrophes
while we are closed inside them.

We go for walks
in the leaves, in the rising water, we
tell stories, we communicate
delayed reactions.

Meanwhile on several
areas of my skin, strange bruises glow
and fade, and I can't remember
what accidents I had, whether I was
badly hurt, how long ago

requiem for a friend

Frances K. Smith

Because you lived to question
is reason enough
for me to follow;

because you paused to wonder
signals a vision
imaging my doubts;

I am an extension
in and out
of time
bridging question
and illusion;

I am the sounding board
holding the caught breath
as the scalpel
cuts in the flesh
and the rhythm falters;

I am the granary
of your thinking
stored
against a long winter;

turn and return
for repose is not
your way of going
into the night;

travel with banners
and let the trumpets sound.

duluth, midway

George Bowering

Broken concrete on the beach
at the end of Superior
is Duluth.

Minnesota west of water
begins with black bricks of the east
pinched into this point of the lake.

So we rest on the eastward drive
in fancy hotel, watching cowboys on television.

Goodbye
to the west.

Hello
Wisconsin.

Or rather, a different genius, made of maple,
not cedar, something aged
as maple. The leaf rashly thought Kanadian.

I will climb that tree & rattle
the leaves down, cowboy boots squashing
insteps on my way.

Hello
Ontario,
backbender

new venture on worn flagstones. You'll wear me
like a coat
like a cedar wagon wheel.

a garland of milne

D. G. Jones

He lived in the bush, the wilderness
but he made light of it

He was at home, sitting
with the small birds around him
gathering seeds, the bare

earth showing through the snow
the sun falling
scenting the air

For him it was a garden

Wildflowers picked in the woods
he placed in a pickle jar
perhaps to sketch

A tent made a pleasance

He let the trees stand where they were
and he went quietly
where islands curled up for the winter

A wife could not abide
that god-forsaken country

but a woman came
as silently as trees
and stayed

Like Eve, she was cut in the grain

He wanted nothing

He lay in wait for ponds, the still
moments when the snow
fell from the branches

Flowers he knew most naked in a bowl

He left Monet
the waterlilies in their wild

and dangerous state

The titans he contained in a cartouche

A battlefield or a deserted house
had a life of its own

No violence

Who flies with the whirlwind is at rest

No one in France
could make such galaxies
of glass and water

intricate with flowers

All space came out in flowers
miraculous, erupting from a void or mouth

And every breath
a wind, or sun, a season or delight
drew colour from the earth

as if a brush
stroked virgin canvas

The hills flew little flags beyond
the painting place

The darkest night drew fires
like jack-o'-lanterns from the street

The children danced like flames

And gaily, gaily glowed the islands
under the storm's spout

The light was never spent

A solemn gaiety awoke
in the white poppy

amid the sanguine and magenta reds

Crooked rows of naked skiffs
and upturned dories
bake,
like empty, colored shells
washed up along the beach,
in the sprawling, brazen afternoon.

march marina

Richard Hornsey

close their eyes
dozing in the sun-spell,
And sweeping, breeze-caught gulls,
and dip
dangerously
near the burning back of the sea.

pome

Havng a thing
with th wescoast
praaps mad
indentification
withit
but um
seagulls wandrng about th park
puttn down ducks
filthy lowd things!
or th sun set beach that
time
p.g. ewart & i
drinkn th last wine
by th shore
but th poets here
sit sick at home
playng ego games
but anyhow thinkng

wescoast when lookng
 out across th narrows
 from j. douglas henderson's
 architectural offices
 its raining out n th lites
 of north van
 pop n twinkle in brilliance
 or th brilliance n freshness
 of feelng i git
 walkn down a westend street
 after a cloudburst
 or th huge mountains
 always lookn grimly
 down at us
 from afar
 or even th weekend scene makers
 'shaughnessy hippys
 yu havta smile abit
 in benevolence n be happy
 even when seagulls tryt
 organize th pid-jins
 n other fowln victory square
 again in victory square
 but remember always
 that th obc camera crews
 keep watch
 over our country

Chuck Carlson

a statue's memory

W. Dobbins Ulrich

Still, without breathing, at the point where elevators drop
 From their highest floor yet never move,
 I hear the now only whispered music,
 Air plays on my body,
 Know perfection was after the hammer's silence
 Before I saw my face, in small whirls,
 Settling on distant fields.

for the unborn child

Wayne Clifford

in the girl's belly
globing with the purpose
of sex

heavy
of the animal

sleep
huge as
womb

this is for you child

I expect nothing when
we are afraid of
our own
sentiment

nothing
of the sense
of person you

are animal weight
heavy as all our progress of dying
and we continue
I expect nothing

I expect

nothing

under the absolute
beauty
of the indifferent stars
the dogs on the street
are screwing

A Road Through Summer Fields

David Helwig

She lay on the wooden floor of her bedroom in such a position that the early morning sun would wake her. This was necessary if she was not to miss the Voice of the Gospel, for the clock had gone long ago. When the sun began to rouse her, she was tempted to turn away from it and go back to sleep, but she fought with temptation and conquered.

There was no need for her to dress since she slept in her clothes. She shivered as she walked down the stairs. In the kitchen, she pumped up a glass of water that was her only breakfast and turned on the radio. It was only ten to seven; she had five minutes to wait.

Outside the birds and insects were loud in praise of summer. Swallows dived into their nests in the barn, and from down the road came the sound of frogs; it was drowned by music from the radio. The music warned her of the dangers of constipation, and she resolved to add a package of laxatives to her meagre supplies. A body that clung to its evil wastes was a poor offering.

It was almost time for the Voice of the Gospel to begin. She prostrated herself on the kitchen floor, her arms out from her sides as they would have been on the cross. Little flesh clogged the communion of her old bones with the boards of the floor. She awaited the familiar voice.

"Good morning on Friday, friends in radioland. This is the Voice of the Gospel. Have you sinned? Are you weary? Come to Jesus: He wants you. He'll help you. Come. Come now."

The choir began. They had heard a joyful sound. Jesus saves. Jesus saves. She pressed down against the floor in search of immolation. She swore to abjure her last few pleasures if she could only be possessed by the warmth of that voice. The hymn ended, and it spoke to her again.

"Has our message reached you, my friend? If so, sit down and write me a letter and tell me about it." He gave the address.

"I've got a letter right here in my hand from one of you," he said. She wondered if it might be one of hers. "It tells of redemption and wonders worked by the Lord in these last days. 'Brother I was sick,' this letter says, 'I had cancer, but I prayed with you, and I was made well.' Oh isn't that good to hear friends? It's a sign. The Lord is coming."

The choir returned. Jesus saves. Jesus saves.

"Save me," she groaned. The choir finished, and the laxative song returned. She got up from the floor and went out of the house. She took the shoes from her feet and walked barefoot through the weeds of the yard and down the road to the creek. Groundhogs lay in the sun, or fattened on the clover of the fields around her. The untilled land was rich with wild flowers. She could hear no sound but the insects and the birds. A half mile away stood a house, deserted, in ruins, the windows broken. She walked down the old road and through the fields until she came to the creek. The springs running into it gave the creek the coldest water in the county. She stepped in. As the pains in her legs began, she started to pray. For several minutes she stood there in agony, praying, and then she staggered back to the house.

As soon as she felt well enough, she wrote a letter to the Voice of the Gospel, telling of her penance, and her longing for Jesus. When it was finished, she took out her Bible and sat down with it on the back steps. She had always found the Bible difficult to read, and understood it best as it was interpreted to her by the Voice of the Gospel. She laboured over the old book there in the sun, but the warmth made her drowsy, and she fell asleep.

She was wakened by the sound of a car coming up the lane. From the height of the sun, she knew it was afternoon, and she was aware of hunger and a sticky discomfort from sleeping on the steps. The Bible had fallen to the ground. The car stopped a few feet away from her, an intruder among the weeds of the yard. It had been ages since another had stood there. A young man and woman got out. The young man smiled.

"We saw your ad," he said.

She could not understand him.

"We saw your ad," the young man repeated.

"Do you have any Early Canadian?" the girl said.

Still she could not understand.

"Pine?" the girl said, "Maple? Walnut?"

"Maybe we'll just go in and have a look around," the young man said.

bowls and a wooden ladle. A dollar for the lot?"

The old woman got up. She took the dollar bill he held out and put it too in the letter to the Voice.

"We better get going," the man said. "It will soon be getting dark."

"She's tired," the old woman answered him. "She better stay here tonight."

"We'll get to a town soon." He took the girl's hand. The old woman watched.

"OK," she said. "Let's go." She turned back for a moment.

"Goodbye," she said. "Thank you for everything."

They walked out. The woman heard the car start and drive down the lane. She could not quite believe they were gone, for she had felt the girl would stay, would be converted. She felt lost and disappointed. It would have been nice to have company, someone who understood. She walked to the door and looked across the fields at the cloud of dust made by their car as they drove away. The dust rose into a clear sky of endless blue.

She looked up at the sky and saw a hawk hanging there in the wind. From her childhood, she had been terrified of birds of prey, and now, with a shudder, she recognized it as a sign. She had been weak, longing for companionship and understanding. She must free herself, cleanse herself while the hawk hung over her house. She was so weak.

It must be the house to go. She had nothing else left. She would leave it and set out alone, live in the ruin in the nearby fields. The radio and the hotplate would be useless there, but that no longer seemed to matter. She would not listen to the comforting words. Instead she would watch the sky. She no longer needed words.

From the yard near the door, she pulled dry grass which she carried into the house. Then she remembered the hay in the barn. That would be perfect.

For the next while, she walked back and forth between the barn and the house bringing hay and piling it on the floor beside the walls. When it was dark, she stopped.

That was the hardest moment she had known. Nothing had ever tempted her so much as the house, her last shelter. But she turned on the hot-plate, lit an old piece of newspaper, threw it into the hay, and ran.

She set out across the fields to the ruined house she had looked

at so often. At first she would not look back. Then when she was part way across the field, she turned to see the flames. She turned back and walked on, stumbling in the dark, not knowing the way. When she reached the ruin and turned once more, the house was gone, the fire close to burnt out. She looked out of the ruin at the dark sky. She lay down on the cold ground to sleep.

"she" as foreground in portrait of a boy:

Douglas Barbour

Only long before he
ever dreamed or
lay among the apples

we know very well that she
was planning small disasters
and waiting

where he never tossed
nor turned nor
threw his sheets in crumples

on the floor and fell
with the cinnamon earth
to trying bites of the apples

nor wandered in tall
grass nor wondered
at the bright sky

that yawned above
and screamed sound-
lessly that day

she found him where
he accidently tripped
over adolescence:

it was never the same
again.

Two Poems by Paddy Webb

twilight swallows

Swallows stabbing gnats from air,
 piercing a still pool of dusk,
 wheeling as on a line reeled in,
 thrusting against the up-rush
 then breaking free; no trail tells their
 passing, but sharp explosions
 pattern in black and white, sky
 like a fluid chequer-board;
 gyrate in diminishing
 convolutions and spear
 frail midges to feed their young –
 head to tail on the barn's beam –
 turning again and again,
 soundless among chittering
 starlings, sickle curve of wing
 carving deep a pedigree
 line. They nest here every year:
 spooning mud from a puddle,
 bird-beaking it into clay
 to daub their wattled houses
 under eaves, in a huddle,
 unmoved by what we may do.

rocker

Young man astride a motor bike
 has smile of leer and hope of like,
 and hair of fair, black leather coat,
 and words of rote, how far is fear.

Young man where care is all for speed
 has no idea what makes the need,
 or why the Cross of Malta wears
 slaps as he swears on God the loss.

The swagger boy, unbuttoned shirt,
 uncertain eyes and mind of hurt
 has work of strike, and shoes of point,
 and girl of paint upon the bike.

Two Poems by Michael Walton

to a child born in august

Last November
we called to you
across the river
(you will not remember) –

*we grow weary
of time town:
bring us a flower
new blown
out of the garden
where we were grown*

We did magic
and stopped the river

*time is on our side
cross over
the river*

now you come
wet and frightened
crying for home
but you come

media

Jack?
for him I'd cut
a granite block
hammer and spike
his brow, his nose;
blows sending chisel chips
fifty feet.

not for you:
no stone so fine
clean the cutting
delicate line
would quite
do.

Two Poems by Stanley Cooperman

jackie's one-shot

Because
I am no leaf of love
to be cut
and mounted
in the coffin of your
smile,

Because
I am more than oddness,
titillation
of a vein
or specimen of sudden
ripening,

I give back your apple.
Let it rot
behind your teeth:
you never
numbered
any part of me.

Single-entry, was it?
then the page
is blank,
and you divided
nothing
between the covers
of your skin
but a reed of dust:

a puff
of last week's
wind.

sunset acres

An island for old geographers: where
 they go to die, being
 infatuated
 with maps, the magic paste
 of continents,
 where

 people
 exist only as round
 dots encircled by the sea, or
 centres of population,
 forests
 of coca-cola bottles
 and sewers
 running in every direction
 under the clean
bones
 of the hills.

For old poets, a New Orleans
 whorehouse

 decorated
 by Ezra Pound, wives of
 both sexes behind
 every sofa, and
 wars
 to take up the slack time
 so they can say something
 useful
 when their teeth turn
 into dry twigs,
 and their dreams become
 lunchmeat
 for hungry animals. . .

For old physicians, LSD and strawberry
 hypodermics, gold-plated
 toilets
 where student nurses dance
 in candy nylon, and



specialize
 in glands,
 an eternity
 of necessary enemas, and
 libraries of General
 Motors, American
 tee
 &
 tee, crinkled
 between pages
 of full-colour illustrations
 useful
 for cancer.

Two Poems by Clifton Whiten

from a street-car

ah! indeed, how one does appreciate
 a juggling-huge-bosomed woman
 laughing up the street
 in bouncing blouse and wind-caught skirt
 and bare-footed like a gypsy wench of blue blue Spain,
 in this jiggling city of tittering mannequins.

t.o., june six-six

Lord!
 that I might at least have enough filthy lucre
 to head for the hills
 and live and die
 my way — alone —
 when I'm sixty-five.

at any rate,
 not like that:
 not a puffed-up crab
 clambering off soup-car trolley-cans
 in any pressure-cooker city like this.

Three Poems by Tom Marshall

notes from a london diary

I

Specimen Scholar

Morning
on Southampton Row. I gasp
like a fish
drowning in air. A pale

disc of flame
tints the day
poisonous yellow.

Crushed
in the coloured slide
I flounder

to the fetid
B.M.

crouch behind
sooted walls like
one of the antiquities

II

Nov. 23, 1966

To be left
alone where
there is no vision.

Drunk, strange, alone.

How pathetically
I reach
for the one person
I have met
that I seem to belong to.

III

Of a certain critic

Did he blaspheme
 against me? Well
 blasphamy is what
 makes religion possible.

IV

Nov. 29, 1966

The strange
 daytime twilight —

This grey twilight
 at three o'clock —

I come home
 drunk.

This thing
 floods the room
 with a mysterious radiance.

I cannot bear
 to turn on the lights.

V

London Nocturne

My nerves are shot.
 The sky is bruised blue.
 A moon like a torn nail.
 Hundreds of city things float
 across my sight.
 Hundreds of insects.
 I hate them all
 indiscriminately.

man walking

There is a man
walking. Against brown
uneven stone
caught in the sun.
He wears a car-coat
and stovepipe trousers.

He sees himself
in series in
the eyelike dark
uneven windows of
passing cars. A long
disjointed man

who walks
toward the square
against brown
uneven stone.
The chances are
he will never get there.

the freeze

One muffled star
on the brink
of spring
is all
this lousy country
can afford.

Poems by Peter Stevens

before the ice carnival

In the kitchen
 my wife stood at the window
 a paper bag jammed
 over her head
 stabbing
 with a pencil at the place
 where her eyes would be
 blazing but murky
 in that paper interior.

Incredulous I thought
 she's succumbed —
 winter has been too much
 for her February's the time
 for despair and retreats
 into blank paper bag worlds
 making a closed universe
 out of some irreparable dementia.

You alright then? Nonchalant
 the best approach humour her
 keep her calm
 and away from the children
 axes and knives
 till I can call the doc.

Yes voice paper-fuzzy
 but otherwise normal
*I'm just making
 a wolf head.*

I sighed with relief
 Everything's O.K.
 It seems she's not suffering
 from dementia praecox then
 just
 lycanthropy.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CIRCLE GAME. *Margaret Atwood*. Contract Press.

NAKED POEMS. *Phyllis Webb*, *Periwinkle Press*.

These two books of poems remind one that poetry is a compromise between speech and silence. For some people poetry may say too much, and they then suggest that poetry should "aspire to the condition of music." For others poetry doesn't say enough; it should be explicit. Harold Pinter reveals that the relation between sound and silence may not be so simple:

The speech we hear is an indication of what we don't hear. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen. . . . One way of looking at speech is to say it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness. . . . I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is *unsaid*, and that what takes place is continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves.

In *The Circle Game* Margaret Atwood is bent on getting it said, with the hope that it, whatever it is, can be said, even though she recognizes that speech may not do the trick:

at last, you will say
(maybe without speaking)

.....
all I need to know:
tell me
everything
just as it was
from the beginning. ("Against
Still Life")

In *The Circle Game* language is in pursuit of experience, and the difficulty of the chase creates a feeling of desperation, for one never feels that any word will do. In *Naked Poems*, on the other hand, the possibilities of silence are explored; Phyllis Webb moves continually toward a moment when the single word will suffice:

What do you really want?
want the apple on the bough in
the hand in the mouth seed

planted in the brain want
to think "apple"

The final poem of her book is, indeed, one word — "Oh?" When Atwood's poems don't work, it is because of the pressure to over-define. Such phrases as "rational whine of a power mower," "discouraged grass," "the final sword," and "a refuge human/ and secure" use abstractions to nail down a feeling, and the feeling simply slips away. When Webb's poems lose intensity it is because one just hasn't had enough to get moving:

I have given up
complaining
but nobody
notices

I rather like these lines, and they can almost stand for the many experiences of this kind, but one wants *her* sense of how this might grow, and (perhaps) more situation.

The energy in Atwood's poems comes from exactly what she says at the end of the long title poem:

I want the circle
broken.

The circle is many things, isolation, fixed patterns of response, but mainly it is our ordinary sense of our bodies, the most common sense of all. Many of the poems are based on moments when the body loses that common sense of itself, and the usual sense of the body seems inadequate, a trap, or a very limited perception. The best of the poems struck me in the way that I was struck when I heard that the continents floated, that the atmosphere was a sea, and when Thoreau asked, "What is man but a mass of thawing clay?" It is metamorphoses of the body that break the circle:

The world is turning
me into evening. ("Evening Train-
station Before Departure")
but here I blur
into you our breathing sinking
to green milleniums
and sluggish in our blood
all ancestors
are warm fish moving
("Pre-Amphibian")

Most of these transformations are touched by horror; the opening poem is about the most horrible transformation of all, the disappearance

of the body, death:

(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.
I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the sur-
face.

But some are benign, even exultant,
as in the final poem:

Now horses graze
inside this fence of ribs, and
children run, with green
smiles, (not knowing
where) across

the fields of our open hands.

Such metamorphoses frighten, be-
cause they suggest that there is,
finally, no form, no central pattern,
no final sense of the body or any-
thing else. We therefore find a
counter-movement:

Another sense tugs at us:
we have lost something,
some key to these things
which must be writings

("A Place: Fragments")

Must, anyway, if one is a poet, but
there is also love:

. . . you
taste of salt,
and put together my own
body, another
place
for me to live
in. ("Letters, Towards and

Away")

I like, even revel in, what these
poems are about. There are many
moments of recognition (yes, that's
the way it is), and if the language
sometimes seems to fail in the
attempt to embody feelings and per-
ceptions that are elusive, it is only
personal disappointment one feels.
There isn't one poem which made
me wonder why she bothered to
write it; there is a wonderful urgency
about the poems. It is a fine book.

Phyllis Webb's *Naked Poems* is a
book of poems. One feels that it is a
deliberate attack on the tradition of
the Golden Nugget, which leads a
critic to say "Yeats wrote 20 or 25
fine poems." *Naked Poems* is a
book with parts that are difficult to
remove without feeling guilty. This
is emphasized, in fact first brought
to one's attention, by the lovely job
of printing and design by Takao
Tanabe. It is further enforced by
the fact that the book is not so much

made of single poems, as of groups
of poems. There are three "suites",
and the first two are closely related.
Suite I ends,

YOU
took
with so much
gentleness
my dark

and Suite II concludes

*You brought me clarity
Gift after gift
I wear.
Poems, naked,
in the sunlight
on the floor*

(I asked someone who should know
and he said that the italicization of
Suite II was purely a matter of
design. That seems a bit arbitrary
to me, but perhaps poets should drop
all typographical tricks as a way of
meaning something, which would
then free the designer to do what he
wanted.) There is also a Suite of
Lies, and a series titled Some Final
Questions. In the center of the book
is a section of Non Linear poems,
that is, more or less isolated lyrics.
So *Naked Poems* insists on being
read as a book. In fact, this has
been done already in *Canadian
Literature* (Spring 1967) by John
Hulcoop. In his essay he traces the
basic concerns of Webb's poetry, and
concludes with a discussion of the
major themes of this volume, sex,
poetry, and religion. So I shall move
to other matters.

Naked Poems is introduced by a
small poem which can serve as
example:

*star fish
fish star*

The very beginning of poetry. As
they say in the texts, it has a begin-
ning, middle, and end. It has rhyme,
internal and external, and rhythm. It
has something of incantation about
it, which reminds me of the way
kids chant, "police, police, police,"
until one hears, "lice-po-lice-po-
lice." It forces a new sense of the
words, by disrupting our normal
sense of the word "starfish." It
brings together things from different
places, sea and sky, and opens sug-
gestions of stars swimming, fish
glowing, etc. It suggests patterns
beyond itself, both natural and syn-

tactical, i.e. makes itself into a metaphor. The key point is that it is a metaphor with the least possible definition. It is surrounded by the most possible silence. If Wordsworth got the images into a poem, you could be sure it would issue in a pantheism based on similar patterns in nature (which is really a totally different way of writing a poem). The poem is what I would call an open metaphor, a metaphor as open as possible, so that the entire movement of the poem becomes the metaphor. The movement is not merely rhythm, but the shift from an allusion, to a re-worded cliché, to understatement (I am thinking of the Non-Linear poem

I am listening for
the turn of the tide
I imagine it will sound
an appalled sigh
the sigh of Sisyphus
who was not happy)

Or in the poems quoted above the reciprocal acts of giving and taking become the basis; in the opening poems of Suites I and II it is moving and being away from that form the basic pattern.

MOVING
to establish distance
between our houses.
It seems
I welcome you in.
Your mouth blesses me
all over.
There is room.
*While you were away
I held you like this
in my mind.
It is a good mind
that can embody
perfection with exactitude.*

The poems must be small if this sort of movement is to carry over from one to the other. Webb sees the movement as basically sexual, with natural echoes:

lord, they are the root waves
of the poem's meter
the waves of the
root poem's sex.

I would like to think that it is 'he units of which such movement is composed which Webb is referring to when she writes,
a new alphabet
gasps for air.

There is something of Robert Creeley's attempt to make rhythm very much more than meter in Webb's poems.

There is a danger in writing this way, and I don't feel Webb always avoids it. I disagree with Pound when he speaks of an "absolute rhythm." It is too much on the side of silence, too much a denial of the referential side of words, and at times leads to a poem so detached that the energy of the words is gone.

Why are you standing there staring?

I am watching a shadow
shadowing a shadow

Here we have the "fish star/star fish" once more, but one feels that something is missing. Sometimes the poems seem more un-fleshed than naked. But the main drive, the drive toward open metaphor, total rhythm of sound, syntax and image, is in the central tradition of modern poetry.

To return to my title. How naked can the poem become? In Margaret Atwood's poems there is a desire to exhaust the metaphor, the possibilities unleashed, and I think that desire is very much part of the goodness of the poems, even if it disturbs the sense of finish and completeness. In Phyllis Webb's poems the language ends quickly, and the suggestions are left to radiate of their own accord, but at times one feels somewhat cheated. Trying to pare the poem down to the essential metaphor, to the root waves, can lead to a lack of connection and a lessening of energy. Each poet decides where the compromise is made, and both books are worthy examples of their respective methods.
Roger Seaman

FROM THE PORTALS OF
MOUSEHOLES. *Seymour Mayne.*
52 pages. Cover design G. A. Y.
Taylor.

THE CIRCUS IN THE BOY'S
EYE. *Jim Brown.* 40 pages. 11
drawings & cover design by Bill
Bissett.

LETTERS FROM THE SAVAGE
MIND. *Patrick Lane.* 60 pages.
Cover design Bill Bissett.

The strongest of these three first
Very Stone House books is Seymour

Mayne's tho i find the title ridiculous. Care has gone into the visual layout, choosing the typewriter face, & organizing the poems. It is regrettable that Mayne's poetry is still so much the same as it was when i first read it (was it 4 years ago?). But in it, in a very small number of poems, Mayne is feeling his way into a vast unexplored area of his poetic possibility.

"looked at the rectangular clock & opening the windows
felt some of the blueness sifting. . .
there is so much room"

One or two poems that make the whole book worthwhile.

Brown's book is almost as strong, chiefly because he wisely limited the number of poems included. Brown is still feeling his way into poetry as is obvious from poems as far apart as "the circus in the boy's eye", & "the buses are tripping out", "waiting for th bus", & the "Departure" poems. His focus is unclear, seeing too much to take in at once, as the title suggests. Yet once again there is the promise

"when all the disguises
have been tried,
all the roles and positions
and masquerades —

will

we stand naked
or will knowing
become a kind of clothing?"

a promise i look forward
to seeing fulfilled.

The only good thing in Pat Lane's first book is the title, which is brilliant, and the poem from which the title is taken. The rest of the poems miss. Lane has included too many too much the same. His limited poetic devices have been ground into

the page by the end of the book making for repetitive, uninteresting reading. Had the whole book been up to the title poem this would have been a different review.

by Nichol

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ZOUNDS!! — the sounds of Bill Bissett

Who is the funny fellow who declines to go to church

Since pope and priest and parson left the poorman in the lurch

And taught their flocks the only way to save all human souls

Was piercing human bodies through with dum dum bulletholes?

James Joyce, "Dooleysprudence"

On the whole, it must be admitted that ideation reigns supreme in language this does not mean that volition and emotion are not expressed. They are, strictly speaking, never absent from normal speech nuances of emphasis, tone, and phrasing, the varying speed and continuity of utterance, the accompanying bodily movements, all these express something of the inner life of impulse and feeling, but as these means of expression are, at last analysis, but modified forms of the instinctive utterance that man shares with the lower animals, they cannot be considered as forming part of the essential cultural conception of language, however much they may be inseparable from its actual life.

Edward Sapir, "Language"

As I have stated in a previous article (Ganglia 4) Bill Bissett's con-

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cern is language and he approaches it from visual and auditory angles. In this article I wish to deal with his auditory approach, reactions to it, and its significance in terms of directions in contemporary poetry.

To explain sound poetry to someone who has never heard it is difficult so let us say as simply as possible that for Bissett the poem is a written score only in so much as it gives him the basic words or sounds to be followed. The rest is improvisation on his part in which he varies the tone, the emphasis, the phrasing, the speed, etc. In a poem like the following

my lady sd hold it in there
 my lady sd o hold it in there
 th fire is all ovr th fire is
 all ovr my lady burns my
 lady is burning hold it in
 there o th heart is cum to
 th heart is cum my lady cum
 hold it in there th tempul
 burning th sky is opend th
 sun fires thru us th sky
 is a open my lady sd hold
 it in there th fire is cum

Bissett brings into play in his reading all those elements that Sapir refers to as expressing the inner emo-

tional life. For Bissett finds it impossible to express everything he wishes to thru a straight ideational language and continually refers to the barriers (not the least of which is language) that we set up around ourselves and their effects.

Symons in his book "Man's Presumptuous Brain" refers to the fact that man is evolving towards a point where he is attempting to totally deny his emotional life. Despite the fact, as Sapir points out, that emotion is inseparable from the actual life of language, the great emphasis of contemporary poetry is on the ideational and not the emotional. Bissett outlined this trap a long time ago in a poem called "The Body" in which he pointed out that any system eventually grows more powerful than the people using it and takes on an independent life of its own.

The largeness of THE BODY would increase and diffuse hopelessly the initial self-betrays invited aroused to sustain it. As a consequence, the belief in self, in character would drop away behind the larger movement of the General Body.

It is in this same poem that Bissett

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outlined the avenue of escape he chose to use and the reasons for his reactionary behaviour in attempting to return to the root elements of both the written and aural language:

to attempt our retreat from the General Body, to let it go on without us, to no longer allow truth to include ourselves. Doing this we have found is still to live without hope. Our sense of hope has been permanently altered or damaged through our involvements with THE BODY. We are not the same as we were inside THE BODY, or as we were coming to it or taking our departure. We have become outside remembrance and forgettings, its illusions and skills, outside time.

A poetry of sound, especially one used in the way Bissett uses it, with few references to our usual modes of "thought", with virtually no beginning or end, is difficult to evaluate. We have no set standards from which to judge it critically. When Bissett says "to no longer allow truth to include ourselves" he refers to the shifting hypocrisies of the 20th century that Joyce refers to that are handed down in the guise of political and religious "truths". And it is these hypocrisies, whether personal or universal, that form our basis for judg-

ing everything. I don't advocate total anarchism in art but I do advocate a greater flexibility that allows us when faced with something new to judge it on its own terms rather than attempting to either absorb and smother it or simply dismiss it. There is a basis for judging Bissett's sound poetry as anyone who has followed his progress over the last few years knows. It has progressed from being a scattered group of poorly executed and poorly placed sound effects into a tight, inwardly consistent and highly imaginative poetry of sound. Through it Bissett expresses emotional themes, usually sexual, that enter into the realm of mantras and chants. They are not poems that are perceivable intellectually but they are perceivable emotionally. Of course part of the problem of evaluating Bissett's sound poetry is that it is not available to them as he does it. One cannot judge his sound poem solely on the basis of their written forms especially since there is no adequate notational system available to indicate what happens when he does read them. Obviously what is needed is a recording of Bissett's readings and it is to be hoped this need will soon be filled.

I repeat that Bissett's concern is

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language and I wish to emphasize that sound poetry is only one of the approaches to the poem that he uses. It is one of the approaches that has generated the most misunderstanding about his poetry because for a long time now people have felt that a man who writes poems shouldn't (quote) do all that other fooling around (unquote). But sound poetry is not simply fooling around, though it can at times take on the aspects of play, for when you cut away the linear sequential ideational language you cut away your own foundations. It is a frustrating, often frightening avenue of expression which can release primitive elements in both the poet and his audience. As Bissett says:

"someone else
might want to experience
this suffocation
shadow held back
dense cancerous quiet
were it oddly enough
that we make love well
or that we
stagger into poems

bp Nichol

JOURNEYING AND THE RETURNS. *bp Nichol. Coach House Press: 317b Bathurst St., Toronto 2B, Ontario. \$3.50.*

B.P. Nichol's *Journeying* is really something new for us and I actually feel that QUARRY readers should get hold of it since the very way *Journeying* is produced says something witty and thoughtful. The whole bit came in a case with a picture on front and comment by author on back. Inside are (1) a record of *Scrapture #5* read by author and really what might be called *chansons concrete*.(?) If you've heard African songs in the original tongue — all magic and strange: how about someone making up their own African language and making it up very authentically? That's what B.P.Nichol has done. There are other poems on the record too — one vowel work — carefully produced — showing you how to read the poem book also included. Visually the poems seem sparse — but read aloud they become very rich poems in some other language. Besides the record and the small

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book there are (3) a flip book called *Wild Thing* for the Troggs. You may remember those big little books where a figure of Mickey Mouse did a dance in the right upper corner as you flipped the pages? (4) In an envelope marked "Letters Home" various concrete poems on different kinds of paper — mad typewriter fantasies on words like *orgy* and *turnips* etc. etc. and a kinetic poem/ sculpt 'for eventual destruction'. There are instructions as to how to fold it before lighting it with a match! There's also a letter from Margaret Avison!

Two quotes — one from Avison, one from Nichol — will help sum up the feeling I get from this very involving "field" that Coach House Press has magnificently produced:

Can there be *mime* in words? — your poem comes to that: magnetic flow of force; speaking that does not distance a person who hears; giving and never giving anything *away*. (Avison).

There is a new humanism afoot that will one day touch the world to its core. Traditional poetry is only one of the means by which to reach out and touch the other. The other is emerging as the necessary prerequisite for dialogues with the self that clarify the heart and soul and deepen the ability to love. I place myself there, with them, whoever they are, wherever they are, who seek to reach themselves and the other through the poem by as many exits and entrances as possible. (Nichol).

Not the least interesting of all the things this book (a small library really — or gallery or house) made me consider was how many people were listed as having helped produce it. That idea — of a community working together — is the new hope of our society — I've seen it here in London, Ont. with the Nihilistic and ALPHA Centre and it's good to see the social atoms becoming protein molecules even *bodies* in Metro too.

J. Reaney

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NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

DOUGLAS BARBOUR'S poems have appeared in *Canadian Forum*, *Talon*, *Prism*. FRANCES K. SMITH is Assistant to the Director of the Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's. STUART MACKINNON'S poetry has appeared in *Alphabet*; he works at Queen's. DAVID HELWIG teaches at Queen's. A book of his plays and poetry, *Figures in a Landscape*, will be published soon by Oberon Press, Ottawa. TOM MARSHALL appeared in the anthology of 3 poets, *The Beast With Three Backs*. He is doing a Ph.D. in London, England. CHUCK CARLSON has a book of poems, *Strange Movies (i've seen)*, coming out with Very Stone Press this summer. D. G. JONES has published 3 books of poetry: *Frost on the Sun*, *The Sun is Axeman*. A new book of poems, *Phrases From Orpheus* will appear this year with Oxford Univ. Press. PADDY WEBB's poetry has appeared in several English anthologies. She now lives in Montreal. RICHARD HORNSEY is a T.V. producer at the University of Windsor. GEORGE BOWERING has had 3 books of poetry: *Points on the grid*, *The Man in Yellow Boots*, *The Silver Wire* (Quarry Press); his novel *Mirror On the Floor* was recently published by McClelland & Stewart. JOHN HULCOOP's writing has appeared in *Canadian Forum*, *Canadian Literature*. WAYNE CLIFFORD's first book of poems, *Man In a Window*, was published by Coach House Press. MARGO SWISS studies at Trent University, has appeared in *Canadian Forum*. W. DOBBINS ULRICH has published in *The West Coast Review*, *Prism*. CLIFTON WHITEN teaches in Toronto, will appear in *Alphabet*, *Canadian Forum*. STANLEY COOPERMAN has a book coming out with M & S, *The Owl Behind the Door*. MARGARET ATWOOD recently won the Governor General's Award for her book of poetry, *The Circle Game*. A new book of poems will be published next year by Oxford University Press. PETER STEVENS teaches at the U. of Saskatchewan and has appeared in several little magazines. ROGER SEAMAN teaches at U.B.C. B.P.NICHOL's *Journeying and the Returns* was recently published by Coach House Press. JAMES REANEY's play, *Colours in the Dark*, is being performed at Stratford, Ont. this season. MICHAEL WALTON teaches at the University of Manitoba.



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THE BIRCHES

By A. J. M. Smith

*Leaning over the lake
slim white birches
curved by the south-west wind
offer a silent rebuke*

or seem to

*When the sun glints
on their leaves*

*dark green or light green
they seem to be flashing
a message*

When a breeze

makes them rustle

I listen

What do they say?

or seem to?



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